

Greek American Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

Tony Stathos and Mary Stathos

April 6, 2006
Sacramento, California

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Greek American Oral History Project

Interview History for Oral History of Tony Stathos and Mary Stathos

Interviewer's Name: Paul J. P. Sandul

Interview Date and Location: The interview was conducted on April 6, 2006, in Mr. Stathos's home in Sacramento, California.

Context Notes: Mr. Stathos and Mrs. Stathos are both children of Greek immigrant parents. During the interview, originally scheduled as a one-on-one with Mr. Stathos, his wife, Mary Stathos, joined in on several occasions, as she came in and out several times. Nonetheless, her contributions, both in time duration on tape and in discussion relevancy, led to both of their names on the interview title. At several points during the interview, the tape recorder was stopped because of an interruption. This happened on several occasions: several telephone calls, Mrs. Stathos enters the room, Mr. Stathos leaves to retrieve schoolbooks, and a perusing of family portraits. Taping resumed when the phone calls and such were over. On one occasion, Mrs. Stathos began sharing a story, which she retold once taping resumed. Mr. and Mrs. Stathos are both enthusiastic speakers, especially Mr. Stathos. On several occasions, either you can hear his watch or fingers hit a glass table. In addition, the phone rings several times as do the chimes of a clock. Finally, occasionally a loud beep occurred whenever someone entered or left the house (the house security system). On two occasions, when a phone call occurred, you can hear Mr. or Mrs. Stathos in the background speaking on the phone.

On several occasions, the tape ran out during a narrative, however, each time, what was missed was immediately retold on the beginning of the next side. On one occasion, while Mr. Stathos is displaying and discussing his Greek School textbooks, the books hit the microphone obscuring the sound quality. Nonetheless, the dialogue is discernable and dictated accurately on the transcript. This also occurs another time when he shares some photos. In addition, both Mr. and Mrs. Stathos either read or speak Greek. A translation is provided if known, otherwise, the word is phonetically spelled. On one dramatic occasion, Mr. Stathos begins to read from one of the schoolbooks and makes the sounds of the Greek alphabet and other words, which are distorted and in Greek, so they are not transcribed. Mr. and Mrs. Stathos are very proud of their family and love to share photographs of their parents and children, as well as themselves. They share a photo album, portraits hanging from the wall, and newspaper clippings of family members and/or personal accomplishments. Every time this occurred, a brief, verbal description is given on tape and within brackets in the transcript.

Tapes and Interview Record: The original tape recording of the interview and a full transcript are held by the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Sacramento. Copies of the recording and transcript are deposited within the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.

[Session 1, April 6, 2006]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

SANDUL: It is April 6, 2006. I am Paul J. P. Sandul and I am interviewing Tony [Anthony] Stathos for an oral history project titled the "Greek American Oral History Project" being conducted by the Capital Campus Oral History Program at California State University, Sacramento.

Mr. Stathos lives in Sacramento, and was born here in the central region of California. He was born on January 15, 1928 and is currently 78 years old.

Now, I wanted to begin talking a little bit about your background. You were born in 1928, here in Sacramento. Now, do you recall anything about your mother?

T. STATHOS: Oh my mother, very well . . . my mother lived to the age of 85, and that was probably, ten years ago, I must have been 65, 67 years old when mother died, I knew her very well.

SANDUL: When and where was she born?

T. STATHOS: She was born in Kalamata, Greece.

SANDUL: What region is that in?

T. STATHOS: That is the southwest portion of the Peloponnesus, the giant island, the big island. She was born in the southern, southwest.

SANDUL: And how about your father, was he born in the same region?

T. STATHOS: He was born in the little village called Azlanga, which was about three miles from Kalamata, just on the outskirts of Kalamata.

SANDUL: And what were your parent's names?

T. STATHOS: My father was Peter George Stathos.

SANDUL: And your mother?

T. STATHOS: My mother was Stavroula Stathos. That's the married name. The Greek name . . . those are the anglicized names of my parents. My father's name in Greek is Pericles. I named my son Pericles. And in Greek we say Pericles Georges Statholopoulos. Some Greek will translate that for you.

SANDUL: Now can you describe the place in Greece from which your parents migrated from?

T. STATHOS: Well, okay, I was able to visit Greece much later, but by the time I got to Kalamata, it's a very growing metropolis. It's one of the largest cities in the southwest of the Peloponnesus. And the home where mama was born, my cousins had demolished it and built, put a commercial building there. Now my father . . . all of my father's side, this is very interesting, all of my father's side, all the Stathos's left the village and when we went back to the village they could only recall very generally that there were

Stathos's that lived there. All of my uncles, well my father, his brothers, his cousins, the whole Stathos clan moved to the United States.

SANDUL: How did your parents earn a living while they were in Greece?

T. STATHOS: While they were in Greece, they were farmers. And they worked day to day, they had to do whatever they could to survive. As a matter of fact, my father used to walk to the fields past my grandfather's house and my grandfather, Anthony, actually my name, and used to greet him everyday. Who would know that twenty years later he would marry one of his daughters who would be my mother, okay?

So they worked out in the field, the *xoráfia* [kor-ah-fia: phonetic] they called them and they did what all peasants did. You till the soil, you pick whatever fruit, you grew your own vegetables, you did whatever you could to make a nickel. It was a difficult living for them, quite difficult.

SANDUL: Do you recall any types of the fruits or vegetables in specific that they grew?

T. STATHOS: Well now, in Kalamata they grew a lot of mulberries for the silk worms. Kalamata is very well known for its silk production. And I'm sure you've heard of Kalamata olives? Alright. Well, they are a product of our village . . . oh . . . cucumbers, tomatoes, they ate all kinds of vegetables, very little meat. Yes, meat was very expensive and what kind of meat they did eat was goat, goat meat, and they used their milk for

making cheese, goat cheese, the famous Greek feta cheese, okay. Well, they grew every vegetable they could. They eat whatever meat they could, okay. They made a lot of wine, of course Greeks love wine. When father came here, we used to make wine in the basement and anything else you might think of.

SANDUL: When did the first members of your family come here from Greece?

T. STATHOS: When?

SANDUL: Yes.

T. STATHOS: My father was born in 1882. He came here when he was twenty years old, so he came here in 1902.

SANDUL: And your mother?

T. STATHOS: And mother came here twenty years after that. Papa was forty years old. As typical in those days, he made money, saved money, sent a postcard back to the village that says, "Have money, send wife." Okay, so my father, mother never knew each other until the first time we met. And that is very, very typical. The same way my in-laws, my wife's father. And his forty, he sent away for my mother-in-law and they didn't know each other until they met.

SANDUL: For what reasons did your father leave?

T. STATHOS: Well [laughter], to improve his life, to move to the New World where there was opportunity and chance to grow and improve and to raise a family.

SANDUL: How about other members of the family, did they come as well and maybe what pulled them?

T. STATHOS: Well, then, I think my uncle Gus was the first to get here, my father's brother. Then they sent for my father. They sent then for my Uncle Frank and they sent for my last uncle, Uncle Tom. Now we never did get to know Uncle Tom, he moved to Chicago, but the other three all moved here in Sacramento so all of us cousins grew up like brothers and sisters.

SANDUL: So, was it common then for people in your family to come here to the United States or did some in the family actually resist?

T. STATHOS: I'm sorry?

SANDUL: Was it common then for many in your family to have, then, to come here to Sacramento or were some resisting to come here?

T. STATHOS: Well, the way it work, so you understand the history, is that they landed in New York, broke. As a matter a fact, back from the story is my father landed in New York, Ellis Island, couldn't speak a word of English and of course they had Greek interpreters. They asked him his name. He repeated his name in Greek, Pericles Georges Statholopoulos. He said,

“From now on you’re Peter Stathos.” And it’s very fortunate for us because I’m glad we don’t have the long tag.

Now, they then moved to Chicago, they worked in the slaughterhouses. And they used to work for ten cents an hour. They used to work eighteen hours a day. And sometimes if the boss didn’t feel like it, they didn’t pay them. Okay, well, he got on to the railroad gang and worked his way west. Now, very interesting thing about all the people who came to America then, they all worked on the railroad—many of them I should say. There was a Greek crew, there’s a Italian crew, there’s a German crew, whatever. And what they would do, they would assign one straw boss for each ethnic entity. And my father turned out to be the cook, he did the cooking for his group. Thirty, forty, fifty men. Okay. And he started to learn his English that way. And then they kept working west, he came to California, and of course farming was a part of their life.

So my three uncles, my dad, my two uncles got together and they opened up a farm in Klamath Falls. And then they improved, they did well, my dad came here to Sacramento and opened up a restaurant. Unfortunately, it happened to many other the first early Greeks, they hired other Greek people. And now my father being a very honest hard-working man, assumed that they would be honest hard-working men.

But unfortunately that wasn't the case and they kept, you know, tapping the till. And he lost his restaurant. And he ended up working for the Setzer Box Factory here in Sacramento for, golly, for thirty, thirty-five years. Setzer, S-E-T-Z-E-R. That's still in existence. So that's how we, dad, worked there until he retired.

And of course that was dad's part. Mama, like all the women at the time, Chinese, Italians, whatever, worked in the canneries. Alright. Used to put in long hours in the cannery, canning peaches, apricots, canned tomatoes, whatever fruit or vegetable was in season at the time and they worked at the cannery.

SANDUL: When your father moved here, it was always then designed to be permanent because I've heard stories of some Greek young men coming here, going home after making some money?

T. STATHOS: Well, you know, I can't answer that truly but in all the time I knew my father he never gave a thought about ever going back. As a matter of fact, in our youth, we used to ask him, "You know Papa are we going back to Greece?" He says, "Some day, some day." But, he wanted to remember his Greece as it was. He, was, became Americanized enough that he knew that it was impossible to go back and I never saw a real desire for my father to go back, no.

Now one time my mother went back and she says, "I may stay children." I said "Mama if that's what you want then go ahead." But in six months she couldn't wait to get back to the United States [laughter]. She wanted to get back to her movies, her radio programs, [laughter] her friends [laughter]. And so . . .

SANDUL: Did your father ever express, or do you have any recall of him expressing, about the feelings he had about leaving Greece?

T. STATHOS: The best I can recall he says, he would say in Greek, which has little different interpretation, you know, he says, "Children it was difficult, I had an opportunity, I took it, my brothers and I, we saw a chance to move ahead, we knew that we couldn't do well in our own country." And, basically that was it, he came to find a new life, yes. So, that helps answer your question "Did he ever intend to go back." I would say ninety-nine percent, no.

SANDUL: What were your father's and your mother's impressions of the United States before they came?

T. STATHOS: [Laughter] All papa could remember is how hard he had to work just to make a living. It was confusing. It was interesting, exciting, they were happy, very happy to be here, always happy to be here. And, when you're working eighteen hours a day in the slaughterhouse, you know, and you're trying to get a few hours sleep and a little something to eat

you don't have much to do with the outside world, your locked in the slaughterhouse. Or you're on the railroad, you're out in the . . . out of way from town, you're working in distant places. There's a . . . and the thing that works is the Greeks slept with the Greeks, the Italian with the Italian, the whoever with the whoever. So they maintain their very close social and ethnic identity. And, so he spoke Greek, they lived Greek, they ate Greek, they cooked Greek.

And, of course, one of the most important aspects of Greek life for the men was the Kafenio . . . Kafenio. And this simply is what it sounds like, a coffee shop, okay. There they would have their Turkish coffee, they would have their little Ouzo, or Metaxa, or whatever, or they just drank straight wine and it was a social club. You paid a couple of dollars, you went in, you played cards, you did whatever you wanted. And then they would pay the owner of the property, who would be Greek of course, give him a little something, pay the rent, and so he could make a living as well. Our famous coffee shop in Sacramento was at 6th and K Street, it was on the second story building and you could go up there, and I went up there a number of times as a boy. It was an interesting atmosphere, big open hall with little card tables here and there and the men are smoking and people talking here and there, never loud, and you walk in but, now, when us kids walked in, a giant hush, they'd all turn

and looked at us. And my father was there and we would go tell him what we needed, you know, papa we need this or that and then we'd be out. And then they'd start again. But every time we came up some would say, "Hand us one of those Greek candies . . . pasteli." I don't know how to name them in English . . . pasteli. They're honey covered little nut-like things, very sweet, and you know, okay, "Here's your candy, get out of here."

And here comes my wife, you want to shut it off for a minute.

[Stathos's wife Mary Stathos comes home, tape paused for greeting].

[Mary Stathos (M. STATHOS) joins interview]

T. STATHOS: Yes, and talk about the coffee houses and one of my little secrets, I'd take my little sister up there, or one of my little sisters, and we'd go in, as I said, the whole place would be silent, we'd walk over and papa, or one of my uncles, dig in their pocket for a nickel, you know, get the nickel and a little candy bar and we're on our way and then they, everything go great. But if you did it too many times, you got chewed out for it. You did that only on a rare emergency when you need a nickel so badly [laughter]. Because that was their private . . . you know, enclave, that there they got to be Greeks, you know, completely Greek, speak Greek, do all the things that Greek people love to talk about, they talked about politics . . .

M. STATHOS: And they'd play cards.

T. STATHOS: Oh yes, they played cards and other games as well. And they were fun places and we sometimes we would sneak up there and stand in the back and watch them. I used to love to watch the Greek people. And Mary and I, we both love being Greek. We both feel that our heritage has given us a very special interest and look on life, it really has.

M. STATHOS: But when we were little kids we used to go to Greek school after school three times a week and we hated it, of course, I'm happy now that we learned to read and write. But we used to go, or I myself, we lived in East Sacramento, we'd take the, by ourselves, little kids, my bother and my sister and I, we were the three oldest, we'd get the bus, on McKinley Boulevard, go all the way downtown and then get off at the log cabin, which used to be on . . .

T. STATHOS: 7th and J.

M. STATHOS: Yes, and walk all the way down to N Street to the church . . .

T. STATHOS: 7th and N.

M. STATHOS: Of course, it was safe in those days. And we used to have to do it three times a week: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, after regular school. And, of course, when your kids you want to play.

T. STATHOS: Well, of course you have to know about Greek with what Tom Hanks once said, he says "the Greek Orthodox religion isn't a religion it's a way of life . . .

M. STATHOS: It's not just a religion, yes.

T. STATHOS: It's not just a religion, it's a way of life. So, you can't separate a little Greek from his heritage, his language, and his church . . .

M. STATHOS: And we know we'll never be alone because we're just like a huge family, you know, and I think that's something that . . .

T. STATHOS: And we do believe in the old saying, there two kind of people: Greek and those who want to be Greek. [Phone rings]. We believe that . . . go ahead, we can keep talking.

[Mary leaves interview to talk on phone in the background]

SANDUL: Trying to get back to your father here, do you recall him ever talking about some of the impressions he had about the United States before he moved from Greece to the United States?

T. STATHOS: Yes . . . they knew it by history, by the time papa was born in 1882 the Turks had been expelled and their still trying to make their new way of life, you know. One thing is even after a hundred years of occupation the Greeks were able to maintain their culture, their religion, their customs and so forth. So one thing we all have in common is the idea that they were all Greek that they overcame one of the most horrible dictatorships ever and he could only relate to what he heard in return, okay. So, he wasn't personally involved except it was a difficult life.

SANDUL: How did your father travel to the U.S., as well as your mother, I mean how did they actually travel?

T. STATHOS: Oh, you mean from Greece?

SANDUL: Yes.

T. STATHOS: Of course, they came on ships . . . came on the wholesale, called cattle ships. They used to crowd everybody in. And father landed in New York, went through Ellis Island. My mother, I don't know how come, must been different quota, but she came in through El Paso, Texas. I don't understand that.

[Mary returns to the interview]

M. STATHOS: Just like my mother came in though Cuba because Ellis was filled.

T. STATHOS: Through Cuba, yes.

SANDUL: Did he recall anything about the journey? You specifically said he called it a cattle ship.

T. STATHOS: You know, they really didn't talk about their hard times. We'd ask him and he kind of . . . he didn't want to get us involved in the problems he had, you know. He wanted to make things good. He said, "Yes, it was a little difficult." And it was simply a matter of the Greek way of courage. You simply do what you have to do."

M. STATHOS: But they worked across the United States . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes, I explained that. Her dad was on the railroad along with my dad.

And they worked their way west. Now, Mary's father became very successful. He used to own the Alhambra Laundry . . . and Fotos Saloon Supply, which is now Community Laundry and Linen.

M. STATHOS: And Fotos Saloon Supply . . . I don't even think that that's there anymore.

T. STATHOS: But, he was a hard-working man. He used to get up at what, 4:30 in the morning Mary, and get all the heaters and boilers going instead of hiring somebody. Here he is, the boss . . . Greeks like to do things themselves.

M. STATHOS: But, you know, what amazed me is how they came, did not know the language, but yet they became, you know, owners of many businesses and I think . . . it's really . . . I just have to hand it to them. It's a miracle . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes . . . They're all workers, all workers. No one ever waited for a hand out. Greeks are just too proud for that. Next.

SANDUL: Do you remember any of their initial impressions of Sacramento when they first arrived?

M. STATHOS: Yes, I'll tell you what my father always said.

T. STATHOS: And my father says it too . . .

M. STATHOS: No.

T. STATHOS: But Mary will say it.

M. STATHOS: He says, my father would tell us, of course, in Greek, he says, "You children are so fortunate that I brought you to Sacramento, it's paradise, because it is just like Greece . . . the weather and everything." . . . Because he went to San Francisco first and he hated it, you know, but he says, "You're lucky I came to Sacramento" [laughter].

T. STATHOS: Yes. . . . And My parents said same thing and he says, "You kids are blessed to be here in this city." And it was probably one of the most beautiful cities in the Untied States at the time, in our early days of growing up. We wish we could go back. They're days that were very simple, when a nickel was a nickel, when for a dime you could go to the show and buy a couple of candy bars. Keep going Paul.

SANDUL: Do you recall what he missed most about Greece? Like you're talking about the weather.

T. STATHOS: Well . . .

M. STATHOS: I think their families. That's what they missed.

T. STATHOS: Yes. I'd have to agree with Mary . . . but like I told you about my father, his whole family came here. So, he had his family. Now, Mary's mom when she came here, she had one aunt . . . one sister, yes.

M. STATHOS: She had one sister. . . . her sister, yes . . . but her mother, her husband, and her sister.

T. STATHOS: They were homesick, no question about it.

M. STATHOS: And my mother said, or well you know, like the mail order bride. Okay, my father met my mother in Cuba. Of course, it was fixed up, she didn't know him. And, he always used to tell us a story when he went to pick her up. He says, "Your mother fooled me," he says, "She sent me a picture where she looked real tall." And you know they like big women. Well my mother was petite, tiny. And she says, "And then I look at her and I says . . . so I told her, I says, 'Thespo, go back, I'll, no, I'll find you another groom. I'm not really good for you because I'm older.'"

T. STATHOS: "I'll find you another bride," yes.

M. STATHOS: She says, "No, my mother sent me to marry you and I am going to marry you." He says, "But, I want a lot of children." She says, "I'll give you a lot of children." Well, they had ended up having six of us.

T. STATHOS: And she did.

M. STATHOS: And, yes, she did. And, he was blessed with her, she was an angel.

Because we had . . . most Greek families had not just the mother, father, and children. They had the brothers living with them, uncles . . .

T. STATHOS: Cousins.

M. STATHOS: And koumbari [in Greek: feminine for koumbaro], which are, you know, koumbari are like best man . . . or they baptize your children. They'd live with you. We had . . . in our family, we never were just my mother and father. We always had four or five other people, mostly men. They were

always men, yes, living with us, so they could work here and then we even had some koumbari that lived with us. Three brothers that used to work up at Placerville in the lumberyards and then they drive down, stay. My father would always tell everybody, "You could stay at our house, you can stay." We had a big basement, and so, it was a finished basement. And we had couches that opened up into beds. But we took it, you know, that was the way of life, we didn't know.

T. STATHOS: And very interesting thing, we did the same thing in our family. We had several koumbari live with us. And they kind of took over like they were your uncles, and whether they were or not.

M. STATHOS: Yes, they disciplined us [laughter].

T. STATHOS: They says, and they would discipline you, "You do this, you hear that, you hear what your mother said, hear what your father said, here's what I want you to do." And we accepted it, we accepted it. And . . . I had another point, but . . .

M. STATHOS: But their doors were always open. You didn't have to call and say, "Do you mind if we come and visit?" You just came, you just went. We always had people at our house.

T. STATHOS: Alright, the Greek family. Mama and papa had seven kids. My Uncle Frank had seven kids. My Uncle Gus had seven, eight, nine. A number of them died. Three of them. Had almost nine children, had nine

children. Mary's family has six kids. So, we're all family oriented and we always had somebody to be with, somebody to grow up with, that was a beautiful thing. And, you know, in the Greek home you're all together. So, that was great. . .

[Mary Stathos brings over a large picture, approximately 20 inches x 15 inches, of her mother and father sitting on a lawn. Date unknown, ca. 1920s/early 1930s]

M. STATHOS: This is my mother and father when he picked her up in Cuba. . .

SANDUL: I'm looking at a picture of your mother and father on a lawn, he's dressed, what, in a . . .

T. STATHOS: Is that a little car in the background . . .

SANDUL: We have an old Ford looking car in the background. . .

M. STATHOS: His dressed in a suit. . . . Yes. Looks like in a park. But he took all these pictures himself with a Kodak, you know. With one of the timers . . .

T. STATHOS: With a little tripod.

M. STATHOS: The kind that fold out. But they stayed there for six months. And you know why? Because the government wanted, the Cuban government wanted, payola in order to give my mother the papers and my father, he was so principled, he says, "No, I'm not going to do it." So, it took them six months to get out.

T. STATHOS: And he'd still be here, still be there now if hadn't a friend intercede to bring them over.

M. STATHOS: You see, I guess that, I guess that that's his car back there [Mary points back to the picture of her mother and father on a lawn].

T. STATHOS: So they took that car and then drove all the way back to Sacramento [laughter].

SANDUL: Now I wanted to kind of focus, maybe, a little bit on you.

T. STATHOS: Me?

SANDUL: And your family life. Yes, you mentioned you had seven siblings that was?

T. STATHOS: Yes, one died, one sister died. So, there's three boys and three girls.

SANDUL: And their names again, I'm sorry, the boys?

T. STATHOS: We'll start with George, Sophie, Gus, Tony, Katherine, she died, Teresa, and Anna. In that order.

SANDUL: And were they all born here?

T. STATHOS: All in Sacramento, yes.

SANDUL: Can you tell me a little bit about the house where you grew up?

T. STATHOS: Yes. Grew up on 14th and F Street, right on the corner and . . .

M. STATHOS: Wasn't it 9th and . . .

T. STATHOS: No, 14th and F honey. And I lived there, lived four blocks from Washington Elementary School. And as a kindergartner, I used to walk

to school without any problem. I went to Washington elementary when I was five years old. Went then to 9th and T Street, Sacramento, went to William Land Elementary School and we were there for, oh golly, fifteen years. Then I went from elementary to California Junior High, then Sacramento Senior High School, and one semester at Sacramento City College. Then I joined the air force, become an air force pilot.

M. STATHOS: And you moved from, tell him your different . . . you moved to . . .

T. STATHOS: Where?

M. STATHOS: From 14th and F you went to . . .

T. STATHOS: Oh, yes, from 14th and F we went to 9th and T, then to 27th and W. Where the freeway goes through now.

So, anyhow, ever since I was a little boy I wanted to be a pilot. I had a desire to fly and that's what I did. I flew as a test pilot. I flew B-29s. I flew a number of aircraft. And then I had to make a decision after I've been in for six years, while I had no college, and it appeared that the air force was promoting the college kids, and I only had high school, I knew I was way behind the eight-ball. So, I decided to come home. Plus the fact they were going to send me to B-36s and I didn't want to fly B-36s. And, I also met Mary, which was part of the formula. Now not the, but . . .

SANDUL: And what years were you in the air force?

T. STATHOS: I was in from January 28, 1946 to December 26, 1950.

SANDUL: So you didn't see any action. Too late for World War Two and too early for Korea?

T. STATHOS: I flew sixteen missions as a B-29 pilot over Korea. Even got medals for it.

SANDUL: What kind of medals did you get?

T. STATHOS: I got the Unit Citation and several others I can't even recall. Never did get . . .

M. STATHOS: He made the paper . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes.

M. STATHOS: Yes.

T. STATHOS: When I came over to Sacramento I was really a hit because I was the first pilot from Korea and I told a story about bombing bridges and what not and so forth, yes.

Well, anyhow, I loved my six years in the air force, but it didn't appear that there was going to be chance for me to move up the ladder. And so, I couldn't take the risk and I, if I'd sign up, I would have to sign up indefinitely. Now, I would have to stay in as long as they wanted me but they could kick me out whenever they wanted to. Very one-sided. So I didn't like the odds, so I left. I joined the reserve, but unfortunately, I got involved in going to law school, which interrupted my reserve

training and they, I was a Captain at the time, went from Major, and they just decommissioned me.

SANDUL: Now, to kind of shift back . . .

T. STATHOS: That's alright.

SANDUL: To your school time, do you remember how you were as a student? How you faired in the classroom?

[Mary laughs]

T. STATHOS: I was the runt of the three boys. I had two bigger brothers, were bigger, stronger, could do everything I couldn't. I had a bad time in elementary because I was always the last to be chosen on the team couldn't run fast enough, couldn't do this, couldn't do that, I had a hard time learning, I really had a difficult time. The only thing I could do was read and spell. Now nobody could beat me at reading and spelling. But everything else, perhaps I didn't care, I don't know. But I squeezed through elementary. I had a lot of happy times though, okay, but as a student it was tough for me.

SANDUL: Well what were some of the activities in school, or even outside of school, that you participated in?

T. STATHOS: In school, we used to have some good P.E. programs. We always played baseball, played basketball, and we didn't play soccer, those games then,

they weren't en vogue. And, handball was a great one, we had big walls where we played handball, we played handball for hours.

M. STATHOS: Kickball.

T. STATHOS: Yes, and kickball. We had at that time our park, we had some large parks, and we'd get involved in some tough games.

One of our great activities were the rubber gun wars. You don't know what a rubber gun is. Alright, you take a piece a wood and you fashion it into a gun, okay . . . like that.

SANDUL: So about a foot and a half long?

T. STATHOS: About a foot, you can make short ones or longer ones. And then, on the end, you put a clothespin. And you tie that clothespin real tight with a rubber band. Then you'd put the rubber in to the clothespin, which you would hold it, and you'd stretched it to the end. Okay, made out of tubes, old tire tubes. And then when your ready to shoot, you pull the trigger, and boy, I mean it gave you a zap.

Now the interesting ones were the machine guns. You took a big stick and you made notches in them, okay. And, you had a string, and you put that over that, that one over here, that one over . . .

M. STATHOS: That's pretty clever.

T. STATHOS: Then you pull the sting, one would go off, and then another one, another one. And our favorite place to play was in the cemetery. It used to be

fun there, oh my goodness. You'd hide behind the tombstones, boy. And we're not destructive!

SANDUL: Which cemetery is this?

T. STATHOS: Our . . . Sacramento . . .

M. STATHOS: City Cemetery.

T. STATHOS: City Cemetery. Sacramento City Cemetery. Used to have a lot of great times down Riverside Boulevard.

SANDUL: So you played in the dead neighborhood. [Laughter]

M. STATHOS: Very good.

T. STATHOS: We played around the house too. And then we'd formed gangs. They're some people from one part of town wanted to play us and so forth and we would have rubber gun war. And I can remember some instances where you shot a guy right in the face, he's hollering and screaming, then he says, "You missed me, you missed me." [Laughter]

SANDUL: Do you recall some of your friends growing up, were they primarily Greek American like you or did you associate with some kids as well outside the Greek American community?

T. STATHOS: Everybody . . . no, everybody. . . . We had our Greek relatives but, no, as a boy growing up, I grew up with the Portuguese, the Spanish, Italians. Used to learn pretty could Spanish from them. Some in Portuguese, a lot of Italian kids, we had a lot of Italian kids. And was strange, they used to

go to Italian school, and pretty soon they said they can't go anymore, says "Why," they says our parents said can't speak Italian, that was during the time Mussolini, okay. But us Greek we kept going to Greek school.

M. STATHOS: That was the criteria, we had to.

T. STATHOS: Okay, your question again, I don't think I answered it at all?

SANDUL: No, you're doing fine.

M. STATHOS: Your friends, your friends . . . growing up.

T. STATHOS: We had all kinds, everybody was a friend in our days growing up, you know, and we had no color, we're very color blind and as long as a kid was a good kid, hey he'd join in, I didn't care whether you were black, yellow, oh, grew up with a lot of Chinese and Japanese kids. Our elementary school, I think a third of them were Oriental, whether Japanese or Chinese.

Now, in junior high school, the day of Pearl Harbor, the next day, that was very interesting. I was seventh grade in junior high school, we went there and all these kids, they loved to play basketball, the Japanese kids, their quick and fast. And so we get to the playground, early you know, before school, and their huddled there and their all afraid. Went to talk to them, they didn't want to talk. . . . They acted like they didn't know us. It was very traumatic for them. And it was a little disbelieving

for us. I, you know, I am in the seventh grade, I don't understand what war is, and well some Japanese attacked us, we're going to kill them, no problem, you know, so, but it was very tense on that day, December the 8th. I remembered . . .

M. STATHOS: The 7th, oh, on the next day.

T. STATHOS: Next day honey, and I can remember that day so clearly, yes. Some of us were excited, interested, what not, the Japanese were all frightened of course. And as a boy I used to work on some of the farms, some of the Japanese farms here. If you want to get into my work history, I'll tell you a lot.

SANDUL: Well can you describe some of your work throughout your childhood?

T. STATHOS: Alright.

M. STATHOS: He did everything.

T. STATHOS: From time we're eight years old, we started working. Whether it was helping dad cut wood to sell, whether it was picking grapes, whether it was working at the fish market, whether it was pruning trees, whether you're picking tomatoes.

M. STATHOS: Tell him the story about the fish market, when you used to go to school.

T. STATHOS: Okay, I'm in the 11th grade, okay. And right around the corner from our house is a fish market, okay. One summer I was looking for work, I was sixteen years old, and I go into this place and I look for a job, anything.

And so this place is filled and so forth and I says, "Hello," I, you know, their busy taking customers, selling bait, doing this, I says "I'm looking for a job," he says, "You want to work," I says, "Yes, sir," he says, "Grab an apron." I went to work immediately. And he showed me what to do and pretty soon, and there were other kids were working there too. And I was just so tickled, two blocks away from the house, I had a job.

So he says, "You come in at four o'clock in the morning?" I says, "Yes," and he says, "Alright here is what we do." He showed me what to do about selling bait. I asked how about the other boys, and he says, "Ah, they're all lazy, they don't want to come in at four o'clock." I says, "Well, I'll come in at four." So, I would sell bait to the early fishermen, okay. And no one had sense enough to tell us to wear rubber gloves. I pick up these fish and cut them up, this and that, and I had a great business, everybody knew me, I was there from four o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock. And then I'd come home, brush and scrub up, I used to use Clorox, everything else, on my hands. And then I'd go to school. Now I had little car, sometimes it didn't run, and I had to take the bus and we'd get on, everybody's on the bus, saying, "What's that smell?" Got my hands in my pockets and, "Yeah, what the hell is that?" You know, and but, anyhow, I worked there for almost three years. Three summers, in addition to my other jobs.

SANDUL: What were your other jobs?

T. STATHOS: My other jobs working. I got out of school six o'clock, went to the cannery and worked.

SANDUL: Which cannery?

T. STATHOS: Bercut Richards. Now, this is during school time, okay. I'd go there and I'd work to eleven o'clock at night. Yes, I had my morning at the fish market and my nighttime job at the cannery. And then one time after Mary and I first got married, I was going to the college, pump gas everyday.

SANDUL: Where at?

T. STATHOS: 26th and Broadway.

M. STATHOS: Didn't you work in the hops too when you were a boy.

T. STATHOS: Oh, God, I forgot the hop fields, okay. So a couple of summers, a Greek friend of ours says, "Come on you want to work with us." I says, "Okay." So, when the hops season was on, we'd go pull hops. Now the way you do that is that you get on a truck, the hops are lined up, you know how there tied, the black gentlemen they would go in front and cut the stings, but the tops still had to come down. So what you would do is you would grab them like a whip like and knocked them down and they would lay, you would whip them, and then they would come and lie flat on the truck and then you would intertwine them on a bar . . .

M. STATHOS: The hop fields were where the bridge is, Fair Oaks . . . on H Street, there all hops fields there. . .

T. STATHOS: Yes, Campus Commons and what not.

SANDUL: The Rivergarden farms?

M. STATHOS: Yes.

T. STATHOS: Yes. I'll tell you the name of the hop farms, Pilsner Farms, Pilsner, P-I-L-S-N-E-R. So sometimes, I would work a couple of jobs at a time or work when they were available, et cetera, and . . .

SANDUL: Was it common for young Greek men or girls to be working so many jobs in their youth?

M. STATHOS: No

T. STATHOS: I don't think so, no. We were very poor. And I was, I don't mean to be modest, but I was probably, of the three boys, the most responsible. And all the money I ever made I gave it to my mother. If she wanted to give me any money back, she did

M. STATHOS: Didn't you say one time your father cried because you made more money than he did?

T. STATHOS: Yes, oh, yes, oh god.

SANDUL: How old were you at that time?

T. STATHOS: Okay, this was in . . . picking tomatoes, okay. Alright, they would load all of us kids up there during the war, take us out to tomato farms . . .

M. STATHOS: How old were you?

T. STATHOS: Sixteen. It was with Henry Mendoza, my good Mexican friend. And what they did is they'd paid you fourteen cents a box, okay. So these, Henry and I, he comes from a tough Mexican family, not, most like comparable to our Greek family, not. Tough meaning hard worker is what I mean. And so he and I, we knew how to do it. So, the kids would take one box and walk down the row, fill it up, and they go get another box. What we would do we would throw a box every few feet, down the row, and we marked our boxes. And while the other kids picked maybe twenty boxes for the day, Henry and I would pick almost a hundred and forty boxes, okay. And I'd go home with twenty, twenty-five dollars. And I gave the money to my father and that's when Mary says he cried, he broke down and cried.

M. STATHOS: I remember this story, many times.

T. STATHOS: And he couldn't, he was at a loss for words, he couldn't say a thing, he gave me a hug and he walked away, he couldn't stand it.

But, now mama is a treasure, she ran the house just like my wife and daughters. But I can tell you more jobs, the skating rink, I used to get up and, when, one wasn't there, there was always a job. And of course if we had to deliver newspapers, right . . .

[The tape stops in the middle of Stathos's dialogue. Mary Stathos leaves interview].

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

T. STATHOS: Okay, the *Sacramento Union*, a lot of kids used to help out delivering papers in the morning. Now at that time there were two daily papers, the *Sacramento Union* in the morning and the *Sacramento Bee* at night. Well, we didn't like to work with the *Bee* because that's when our play time, if we had any, was available. So, you'd be up at four o'clock in the morning, deliver about a hundred and twenty papers, and head on home. And, unfortunately, used to fall asleep in class some, you know, often enough times, you know, kind of made school rough on me. I never complained.

But the worst part of the *Union* was on Wednesdays, they had what they used to call the shoppers' news. This is when they stuffed every advertisement it could. It's where the newspaper made its money. Now, I didn't deliver a hundred and twenty to my daily people, I had to deliver to every house on the block. And if these people, who were not customers, didn't get one, they'd call up and they would charge me fifteen cents, okay. Now you have a hundred and twenty papers, you know, you're lucky to make fifteen dollars a month. So you take ten of

those, a buck fifty what not, and then there's always the problem of collection. You bought the newspapers, you see, you paid the bill, the first news monies you collect you paid to the company. If there's anything left it's yours, if there's nothing left too bad, who cares, as long as the *Union* got their money and got their papers delivered. Well I'd have people who didn't pay me two, three months, you know, and I'd tell the boss about it and he says, "That's your trouble." I says, "I'm not delivering to them anymore." And he, "Well see." So, I don't deliver to them. Sure enough, they call up, I got to pay them fifteen cents. I don't deliver the next day, now I'd go on the door and I'd yell. I was riding my bike and they wouldn't answer the door and I would pound on the door and yell, "Pay me, pay me," and I says, "If your not going to pay me then terminate." "No, we want our paper." There were, you know, there's always been a bad side to people, okay. And it used to be devastating to me that, you know, know hard working and honest, that there were people like that, but there were, they just wouldn't pay you.

Well, I finally got fed up with that and I says, "Hey, there's better things to do than this." My last time, I went and collected all the money, I collected all the money, and guess what I did? I says, "I lost it all, I lost it. I had it in a big bag and I lost the money." He says, "Well how you going to pay us for the paper." I says, "Maybe next month." He says, "If

you don't pay us this month, you don't work next month." I says, "Oh well, I don't work next month." So, that's the only time I ever did anything like that [laughter]. But, you know, I was incensed! I was twelve, thirteen years old. I says, "Hey, what's fair is fair." So, anyhow. For all the money I lost in the past, I made it up on that one.

SANDUL: Now I want to focus a little bit on the Greek community itself.

T. STATHOS: Okay.

SANDUL: Describe the local Greek community at the time of your youth.

T. STATHOS: Oh well, everybody went to church. Everybody, when Sunday school was open, went to Sunday school. Everybody went to Greek school. We knew each other intimately, like brothers and sisters. It was great. And no where you went that you wouldn't find a friend, okay. And this is further enhanced by the many parties we would have. All the kids went! The parents were there and us guys were over here. Now, of course they used to segregate group levels, age level, like my brother George had his group, he's four years old, five years older than I, so when he's twelve years old and I'm only seven, we don't have much in common. Well, I got together with the seven, eight-year-old groups. Brother Gus got together with his. Sophie met with her girls. The sisters, eventually when they grew up, they had their little group. So, not only were we all Greeks together, but each had there little hierarchy, okay. And

everybody knew everything about each other. Who does what, what job, what they're doing, the kids, where they came from. And, we just knew everything about each other. I wish Spiro were here now, he could tell you so many things more than I can tell you, but it was great growing up as a Greek kid in Sacramento.

Now, further, as you might know in the Greek culture, your patrons saints' day is your most important day, right, even more so than your birthday. Now the older people, like say my father or my Uncle Gus, it was Saint Constantine's day, okay. Without an invitation, people knew that if they went to his house, the house would be loaded with food and drink. And then when you went and visited one Constantine, if you want, you could go to the other Constantine and enjoy it. And it went on from six o'clock to whatever hours. And they used to take us kids and then that's where we would get congregated as we did. And it was just an open, open beautiful affair. I remember so many beautiful things about growing up as a Greek boy, what more can I tell you. We're all together, we all shared. There's no jealousy among any of us. It was great, when one of us did something well we were all pleased, we were all happy, "The Greek kid did it." There's so much about growing up, it was a great time, we were close.

SANDUL: Can you tell me a little bit about what Greek school was? When you attended? Where it was located?

T. STATHOS: Oh, Greek school [laughter]. Alright, Greek school, what a great. . . .
Alright, we all had to go to Greek school. When you finished your regular school, now, each school . . . I went to Greek school at William Land, that was the closest. Mary, I don't know where she went to Greek school, down, she went to another place. But we would go and they would put twenty of us in a class, okay. We would all be in a school, a regular public schoolroom. They would loan us a schoolroom. Alright, however, you got kids all the way from seven years old to seventeen years old. We're not all reading at the same level, okay, so what they would do, they would give us an assignment from the book [Stathos gets up and comes back with some books from Greek school. Tape paused].

SANDUL: So you have gotten some books from Greek school to look at.

T. STATHOS: Yes, some leftovers, yes, this one is, what, nineteen, oh golly, 1955 . . .

SANDUL: Okay, and they come out of New York . . .

T. STATHOS: 1974, yes.

SANDUL: And, then, in them you're learning basically to read and write . . .

T. STATHOS: Read and write, yes.

SANDUL: And they are using cartoon pictures it looks like.

T. STATHOS: Yes, another one, 1966.

SANDUL: Oh, wow.

T. STATHOS: And you can see that this is called the el-e-neo-payon [phonetic]. That means the kids, the Greek Children of America, the Alphabetion, which means the alphabet, okay. . . [The books hit the microphone, obscuring the sound quality. Stathos reads from one of the schoolbooks and makes the sounds of the Greek alphabet and other words, which are distorted and in Greek, so they are not transcribed here].

Anna, that's my sister's name, Anna. And if you transcribe the two Bs into Ns. . .

SANDUL: Okay, so when you go through these, it takes you to the phonetic sounding to where you eventually get to learn how to say your name properly.

T. STATHOS: Yes . . . okay. Koimoumai [Stathos phonetically pronounces this nan-yey], means sleep. Koimoumai, koimoumai, okay.

SANDUL: Ok, so each name will have an associative picture with it to sort of describe what the word is.

T. STATHOS: Yes, here's a little girl and her mother. And they tell you, Mana, okay, that's like an M, M-A-M-A, just like it would be in English, okay. And here's another . . . a family at the table and it's talking about a birthday and its cakey [phonetic].

SANDUL: Okay, so you're seeing the family around the table with the cake and then you're learning how to say it . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes. . . . in-a-cakey [phonetic]. So they eat cake. And here's a little girl with lemons, and they say lemoni, okay, of course its lemons. And then, then it gets a little further. The leaves are falling from the trees, fyllo. The little kid sleeping there, they say, ypnos, of course it means sleep. So, I'll be honest with you, when you can read this first grade reader, you can speak pretty good Greek.

What I meant to say that, now, in the more difficult books, they say alright here's what your going to do. You are going to read from here to there and you are going to memorize it, write it, remember it.

SANDUL: So you have a bunch of sentences, it looks like ten or so, on one page . . . [phone rings, tape paused].

SANDUL: So we have all of these sentences here and you are reading . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes, it's a story. It's a story about [Tony reads and sounds out the sentences]. Okay, this is about a boy named Nike.

Well they would make us read these two pages. After we've read them, we'd take our book, he'd say, "Now, go write it." And we'd have to write it, okay. And then, that was our lesson for the day.

And now the problem is, alright, you got the seven-year-olds there, each one's reading, takes five-ten minutes, five-ten minutes, five-ten

minutes, you got twenty kids. Ten minutes, twenty kids, is, you know, two hundred minutes. You go there at four o'clock, and here its seven o'clock sitting here, doing nothing, well you're doing the next day's lesson. But you sit there and it was difficult. So, brother Gus and I . . . brother's only a year-and-a-half older than I . . . the teacher's always so busy that brother and I would take our books and go into the cloak room where the bathroom was and crawled out the window. Never missed us, never missed us. We would always like to get read first. Says, "Who's ready?" "Yes, I am, I'm ready." "What you talking about, so I want to read first." So, you then you go sit back, you're pretending to work, and I'd go . . . brother Gus would go in. I'd, five minutes or so later, I'd go and we would crawl through the window and out we went.

SANDUL: Now how old, you started at seven and you stayed until you were seventeen . . . or how long did you stay?

T. STATHOS: How old? . . . No, no. Seven and . . . by the time we were twelve, thirteen, we're starting to get a little independent and didn't want to take the time and our parents didn't beat us for not going, they were unhappy about it. I wish I'd have stayed and learned Greek even more fluently than we speak it. See, we speak, most of us speak, Greek at a fifth grade level, sixth grade level. I couldn't speak Greek as well as I do my English. I could never describe the things I'm saying now, I couldn't

speak that well in Greek. And, certainly I couldn't speak Greek as I do as an American lawyer. But we know enough. We get by. And, what it is, we understand a lot of the Greek, but we just haven't used it and your tongue hasn't become accustomed to it.

SANDUL: Now the Greek neighborhood, was it a concentration or were they dispersed?

T. STATHOS: No. . . . No. . . . We're all spread out.

SANDUL: Was there any sort of concentration of, maybe, businesses then, of Greek businesses?

T. STATHOS: No, not really. We lived 9th and T, closest Greek lived around the corner from us, my Uncle Frank and his children. He lived on T Street, right here [Stathos points to an invented map on the table to help illustrate the location of his home and his uncle's], and we lived around the corner on 9th Street.

Now, what's really interesting, between his house there and our house here, was a big, giant empty lot. You should have seen the vegetables we grew there. So, one of my chores for an hour is to go and open up the ditches and get some water irrigating. We did all that sure. We grew our own vegetables, we love, fortunately, we love vegetables.

SANDUL: And you've indicated this before, but was your father, even before you were born, your family active in the Greek Orthodox Church?

T. STATHOS: Well, I don't know about what he did in Greece. But once they got here everybody was active in the church, we all went to church.

SANDUL: Can you tell me a bit about the role of the church in the Greek community's life?

T. STATHOS: Oh golly, the church is a part of your life, okay. We went to bed at night with prayers. We knew our Easter and our Christmases. We went to church almost every Sunday. And I told you, and I'll repeat it, the language, our culture, and the church, that makes you Greek. I have a saying, "If you don't have all three, you're only a half Greek."

SANDUL: Can you talk about your parents or even your own personal involvement with the church like Sunday school or the Parish Council or . . .

T. STATHOS: Oh sure. Alright. Most good Greek men were on the Parish Council, I served a number of years on the Parish Council. And, I ran for Parish Council President a couple of times, but I was too progressive, too progressive. Well, poor ma, people says, "How we going to do things you want to do Tony." I says, "Let me be president and we'll do it." And they never, they say, "No you got too strong a temper," and I'm, "Too hot headed." So, that's okay.

SANDUL: And what years were you serving on the Parish Council?

T. STATHOS: Anywhere from 1965, '70, whatever. A number of years . . .

SANDUL: Did you teach Sunday school or any other . . .

T. STATHOS: Oh golly, yes. In my later years, I was Sunday school director for almost seven years. And, if I wasn't the actual director, I was the co-director or, you know, who's the director really didn't make much, except that things got done. Sometimes we're director by committee, if you understand what I mean. Yes, and I served a number of years as director. We had excellent enrollment for three hundred kids. And what else was I going to tell you?

Well, the Parish Council. One problem with the Parish Council is why Greece ended up as it did was, you must know this, every Greek, while he's made of other Greeks, is an individual, one independent S.O.B., okay. Greeks are very, very independent and are very, very principled, okay. And it's true throughout my life as a kid of Greek decent. Sometimes it worked well for us and other times, you know, it hindered us, but everyone is his own man.

SANDUL: Did you or did members of your family belong to either the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association [AHEPA] or the Greek American Progressive Association [GAPA]?

T. STATHOS: [Tony slaps his hand on the table] Now you're getting down to it. You're either AHEPA or you're GAPA. You're either from the North or you're from the South [laughter]. Let me tell you now, and I don't mean to be negative about AHEPA, they've done many wonderful things. The real

distinction between the two is GAPA is completely Greek oriented ,okay. AHEPA, is American Hellenic, the American portion comes first. GAPA is Greek American and AHEPA is American Hellenic, you see, you understood that, you got that before [laughter].

But, not that they were in competition, its just you, what makes a guy democrat and what makes a guy republican, you know, its just that simple. And they were not antagonistic to each other, they're helpful to each other. And when AHEPA gave a picnic all the GAPAs were there, and when GAPA gave a picnic all the AHEPAs were there. No, that's where you set aside, you know, GAPA and AHEPA, and that's where you all became Greek, so that they had that commonality.

SANDUL: Were you or any of your family actually a part of either organization?

T. STATHOS: Oh golly yes. Mama and papa were GAPA from the time they could join and all of us kids were all GAPA. And your kids, just like your parents are democrats, you became democrat. And if your parents were GAPA you became GAPA, yes. And it's still active to this day and it's a real great social club. GAPA is responsible for getting some of the early churches started, you know, promoting the Greek ethnicity and founding places for the new Greeks that came over. They were there to help them, in other words, they were like house mothers okay. I can't remember who started first, it may of, the American Hellenic may have started

earlier, but the GAPA was more pronounced in what they did, okay. Both good organizations. You can belong to either one and still be a good Greek.

Now, AHEPA is down to practically nothing here in Sacramento. And they were all national, you understand, national. Every city had a chapter and when they had a convention hundreds would show up. Now we have a convention, maybe a hundred people. And for GAPA there only two large units left. Ours here in Sacramento and one in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was one of the first GAPA organizations and now we're going to have a convention, coming up this summer, and there's going to be about thirty, thirty, forty of them, thirty, forty of us, that's the national convention [laughter].

So you can see our Greek kids have become Americanized and they, while they love being Greek, they aren't strong about being Greek like we were. I mean we're raised in a hundred percent Greek environment. My kids, the first one speaks excellent Greek, the second one not bad, my son, he's still learning. One's fifty-one, forty-nine, forty-seven. And he married a Greek girl so he may end up learning more Greek, his kids speak more Greek than he does [laughter]. And, well, I lost my train of thought.

SANDUL: That's okay. Let's focus on your family. How did you meet Mary?

T. STATHOS: Mary? Oh boy, the greatest love story ever told. Alright. I came home a war hero in 1950. No, you know, I take that back, '49. In '49 I came back because Easter, during Easter, and I was a young handsome person, ten at the time, and at that time, they were having a GAP party, so I took my mom down to the old Elks Club. No, not Elks, on 9th and T Street, anyhow, it's this place where we used to have our meetings. I went down and said hello to everybody, I got hugs and kisses from everybody, "Our little Greek hero," you know, and I met these two people whom I knew well, but who I never met personally, Mister and Misses Fotos, Dan and Thespo Fotos. Now this is a very important man. He's got the big linen laundry supply, well they had a big beautiful house, what not, I thought, "Wow, I'd like to be like him someday," you know. So, I met them that that day, they congratulated me, I thanked them, they wished me well, they wished me well too, too, too well, because later on that evening, I'm told that a friend of ours is leaving for the service. So, they says, "Tony, come on, make sure you come over." So, I come on over, over the house, all the Greek kids, you know, everybody. And while there, we're there, I look across the room, and I says . . . Mary, we're telling your story [Mary returns and joins interview. Mary laughs].

I looked across the room and I saw that girl, and there's a couple of Greek people, there's Vanetta and . . .

M. STATHOS: Kay.

T. STATHOS: Who was the other girl?

M. STATHOS: Kay.

STATHOS: Kay. Kay was standing next to me, I says, "Who's that girl?" Says, "That's Mary Fotos." And I said, "I'm going to marry her." True story. So, I don't know why, but we connected and then. . . we . . . she's only sixteen at the time and I was twenty-three. So, then I tried to go to their house and, you know, meet. And, my mother-in-law says, "Which of my daughters you interested in?" She had an older daughter . . . an older sister.

M. STATHOS: Older by a year and a half.

T. STATHOS: "Mary." She says, "Nope, Mary is too young." I says, "Well, we love each other." She says, "Love is like the dew on the grass [Mary laughs], when the sunshine comes out it evaporates," okay. So anyhow, that's how I met Mary. We went through an arduous . . . year . . .

M. STATHOS: I had to sneak out to go see him . . .

T. STATHOS: We went through an arduous year where I used to write her back and forth, what not. And all these beautiful letters I wrote her, all the things I was doing, oh, I wish I had those. They found them . . .

M. STATHOS: My mother did [laughter].

T. STATHOS: And they burned them. So then, I'm home, I'm going to college, and one weekend my cousin Peter, one that works out and about, and his fiancé, Loretta, they're going to get married, and the four of us were going to Lake Tahoe together for the day. And so, I went to go get Peter, Loretta was sick, so he didn't, says he didn't want to go. So, I says, "Mary you and I go by ourselves." Still sixteen. No, seventeen . . . seventeen . . .

M. STATHOS: The truth. . . . The real story is . . . I had to go over there, because I had to sneak out. So, I went over to his mother's house, where he was staying there. And he says, "Oh, Peter can't go, so we might as well forget the trip." I says, "I went to all this trouble." I says, "Why don't we just go" [laughter]. You know, getting out of the house. . .

T. STATHOS: Alright.

M. STATHOS: "So why don't we just go ourselves" . . . so, okay, tell him the story.

T. STATHOS: So anyhow. So, we're going to Lake Tahoe. There were, just Mary and I. And at this time I had a big beautiful '49 Buick, four door sedan, big, beautiful. You know, and were feeling real good and Mary's sitting next to me there and I said, "Wouldn't it be great" . . .

M. STATHOS: Well, we saw a sign that said Reno . . .

T. STATHOS: Reno . . . A wedding chapel, yes. I says, "Mary, you know, we're having so much trouble with mom and dad wouldn't it be nice if we could get

married secretly. And we would be married, but we don't tell anybody.

And then I know, you'll know I'm there and I know you'll be there" . . .

M. STATHOS: I still had six months of high school . . . crazy . . .

T. STATHOS: She says, "Oh, well, okay." Alright . . . so we went and we got a wedding license. So, I says, "Okay, here's how we fool them," because they used to print the wedding notices in the *Bee* . . . so, "Honey," I says, "We'll go to Verdi, Nevada, you know, they won't publish it." So we got married there and after we get married, so, I tells the Justice of the Peace, I says, "Well, this won't come out of the paper?" . . .

M. STATHOS: You told him our story because . . .

T. STATHOS: "Oh my children," he says, "No, the wedding won't come out, but the issuance of the license well be published." We dashed back to the clerk, says, "Don't let anybody have our names." The gal says, "Why didn't you kids tell us, the guy just took your names." I says, "Where is he" [Mary laughs]. She says, "He's going to type them up now." So we go in, I find the newspaper place, and I says, "Don't mention our names, you can't mention our names." [Stathos acts as the newspaperman as he is typing and lowers his glasses to the brim of his nose and glares upward] "I get twenty-five cents for each one of these." I says, "I'll give you five dollars." He says, "You can't bribe me, I'm a newspaper man" [Mary

laughs]. That old son-of-a-bitch published it. And, so, that was Saturday. Sunday we were in church . . .

M. STATHOS: I was working, no . . . I was . . . I went . . . he dropped me off at home.

So I says, "Monday," I was working summer time at the phone company, I says, "I'm going to check the newspapers at lunch time," I says, "If it's in there, I'm not going home" [Stathos and Mary laugh].

T. STATHOS: It was there.

M. STATHOS: So, I go, and my cousin worked there too, so we go out and get a newspaper and I says, "Oh my god." So I call Tony and I says, "You better pick me up," I says, "I can't go home." And I just had what I was wearing, you know, because I hadn't planned to . . .

T. STATHOS: To make a long story short . . .

M. STATHOS: Yes. So anyway, we go and he picks me up, we go over to sisters, and I says, "I got to call home, they'll wonder where I am." So, he says, "Tell them." So I called, my father, who never answers the phone, answered. And I says, "Papa." He goes, "Yes, my child," he said in Greek, we used to call in Greek. And I says, "I got married," and he said, and a big silence, he says, "Don't ever" . . .

T. STATHOS: "Ever knock on my door again."

M. STATHOS: "Knock on our door again." . . . So I started crying . . .

T. STATHOS: And . . . he said, "Tony," he says once, "look, don't ever step foot in here again," you know . . . So that's . . .

M. STATHOS: And . . . I can understand his feeling, but anyway, he didn't talk to me for a whole year. My mother six months. We got married in the church. And that's six months later my mother came with my uncles but . . .

T. STATHOS: Got married in the Greek Church, yes.

M. STATHOS: And my father wouldn't come. But a year . . . six months . . . in a year after that, he could talk to me. Then they loved him to after that.

SANDUL: Was it important for you to make sure you married within the Greek community . . .

M. STATHOS: Yes, oh yes.

T. STATHOS: To me it was too, yes.

M. STATHOS: I mean it . . .

T. STATHOS: My brother married a Greek girl and my sister . . .

M. STATHOS: And you had to marry . . . we were always taught you have to marry Greek.

T. STATHOS: Yes.

M. STATHOS: Anyone who wasn't Greek was American, okay. You cannot . . .

T. STATHOS: But I came from the wrong side of the family, the wrong side of the tracks. Before that my brother had been a policeman and he was

involved in some kind of scandal and he embarrassed the whole Greek community, so they figured the whole Stathos family was bad.

SANDUL: Would you mind sharing that or not?

T. STATHOS: Yes. He was a policeman, and they were, all the Greeks were so proud, "One of our boys is a police officer." So he was on duty, and this and that, and he's doing real well, and this one old drunk went to the police department, says, "Hey this guy, these two cops, rolled me for eight hundred dollars." So, they found out who's on duty that night and who's in that area. And he says, "Is these the two cops?" He says, "Yeah, that's them, that's them. They rolled me eight hundred dollars." My brother and his partner didn't know what the hell the guy's talking about. And, so anyhow, they let him off. But it became a big scandal in Sacramento.

M. STATHOS: Because Greeks were very proud. Proud of their heritage and anybody who was Greek, he didn't have to be related, but he had to, like, well, it doesn't translate very well . . . to make us white face, they call it. In Greek, it sounds okay . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes, yes, yes . . .

M. STATHOS: But in translation, it doesn't. But you all . . . no matter who you were, if you were Greek you had to uphold your reputation. . . because it reflected everybody.

T. STATHOS: Yes. . . . Yes. . . . So anyhow . . . it reflected on all of us. And it was a very trying time in our life. And I looked up to my brother George as a hero. And I cried and I cried, you know, he was, what maybe twenty-one at the time and I was seventeen at the time and I had just cried so hard that my brother, a big handsome guy, you know, a very nice looking guy, a great looking cop. And we were all disheartened, all disheartened. And, of course, it broke my father and mother's heart as well you might suspect . . . we got through it . . .

M. STATHOS: Did you tell him about the Greek dances we used to have?

T. STATHOS: Yes.

M. STATHOS: That's was our only recreation more or less.

T. STATHOS: Well, I told him all about GAPA and AHEPA.

M. STATHOS: Okay.

T. STATHOS: And, yes. Each of the clubs would have their annual dance. GAPA would have spring fling. What was it, what would you call it?

M. STATHOS: No, it was Cupid's Cue . . .

T. STATHOS: Cupid's Cue.

M. STATHOS: That was the young generation.

T. STATHOS: Yes, the younger generation . . . yes, as a matter of fact, GAPA was spilt in to the older group and the younger group, okay. So, AHEPA had the same thing . . .

M. STATHOS: What were called the new generations.

T. STATHOS: The new generation.

M. STATHOS: Yes.

T. STATHOS: We used to have great time at the dances . . .

M. STATHOS: But its funny we used to go to the dances and, you know, they would, a
boy would ask a girl. But, all the parents would sit in a circle . . .

T. STATHOS: All sit around, they all sit around the wall . . .

M. STATHOS: Just watching us . . .

T. STATHOS: And they all sit . . .

M. STATHOS: The lights blaring . . . [laughter]

T. STATHOS: And the lights are bright, and you're trying to dance, and their all,
"What's he doing." [Mary laughs] . . . Oh golly.

M. STATHOS: So we accepted it . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes . . .

M. STATHOS: Because it was a way of life [Mary lightly laughs].

T. STATHOS: And we gave plays and what not and we did many, many things.

SANDUL: Well what other activities other than, you mentioned conventions,
dances, so what other kind of events were being held?

T. STATHOS: Well we . . .

M. STATHOS: . . . the annual picnics . . .

T. STATHOS: The annual picnics were great. And we had some shows we used to put on. Some skits . . .

M. STATHOS: Well, usually through the Greek school too.

T. STATHOS: For the Greek . . . the Greek school and they always . . .

M. STATHOS: March 25th.

T. STATHOS: And one, March 25th.

M. STATHOS: Which is the Greek Independence Day.

T. STATHOS: Oh listen, that's a great event . . .

M. STATHOS: Oh, and we were as kids, we'd have to remember some poem our teacher gave us and some were very emotional and the people would cry, you know, the older people.

T. STATHOS: Every Greek kid had to learn a poem. If you're a seven year old kid, you did a seven year old poem and so forth. My brother George one time, and he's a bright S.O.B., he's a real thespian, banana, he was a hamburger. And he learned this great poem about, what was his name? Where they were roasting him on a spit?

M. STATHOS: No, my brother is the one who did that.

T. STATHOS: No, my brother George did that long before your little brother.

M. STATHOS: No, it was in the play that we gave.

T. STATHOS: No . . . you weren't . . .

M. STATHOS: No . . . it was another . . .

T. STATHOS: No . . . at that time you were . . .

M. STATHOS: It wasn't a poem Tony, it was a part of a play.

T. STATHOS: Well anyhow, my brother did a great job. And the ending of the poem
and he tells the Turks we're going to kill them. He says they want him
to change. They say, "If you change we'll spare your life." He says, "I
was born a Greek and I shall forever be a Greek."

M. STATHOS: Die a Greek.

T. STATHOS: In Greek though it comes out real strong . . . but, yes, we used to have a
lot of those plays. And then, Mary and I were involved in a play that . . .
it was about an old Greek family.

M. STATHOS: Yes, funny.

T. STATHOS: Exaire lachano, which in Greek means . . .

M. STATHOS: In English.

T. STATHOS: In English means, "exceptional cabbage." But, you say something like,
"Hey, I saw Joe the other day." "Exaire lachano" . . . "who in the hell
cares."

M. STATHOS: Eppie Johnson . . . Eppie Johnson was in that play too.

T. STATHOS: Yes. "Exaire lachano," he says, "Who cares" . . . you know . . . you're
taking cabbage and telling how exceptional it is. Who cares, it just really
doesn't translate, but it really breaks down like, "Who cares." Like, "I
went to the show last Sunday, "Exaire lachano," you know.

M. STATHOS: Big deal.

T. STATHOS: Big deal. Big deal, there you go.

SANDUL: Well, speaking of these activities, and especially with children, you mentioned you had some children. Again, how many?

T. STATHOS: I have four children.

SANDUL: And what are their names and ages?

T. STATHOS: There is Denise, fifty-one, Valerie, forty-nine, Perry, forty-seven, Pamela, forty-one, and we had a little boy that would have been between a . . .

M. STATHOS: Pam and . . .

T. STATHOS: He died. Between Perry and Pam, we had a little boy.

M. STATHOS: This is our Greek school [Mary brings over a picture, approximately 11 x 8, black and white, of children posing for a class photo inside a classroom].

SANDUL: You're showing me a picture of . . . a classroom picture of all the kids posing, okay. And this is Greek school?

M. STATHOS: Greek school.

T. STATHOS: That is our Greek school.

M. STATHOS: This is our Greek school.

SANDUL: And where is this one at?

M. STATHOS: And that was at the old Greek church on 7th and N. We had a little hall like in the back.

SANDUL: And what year was this about?

M. STATHOS: Oh, lets see . . . that's me . . . I must have been about fourteen . . .

T. STATHOS: Fourteen and thirty-five is . . . fifty . . .

M. STATHOS: No, no, no, because it was before the new church was built. The new church was built in 1950. I guess about, there's . . . I don't know who that is. Roosevelt or somebody. [Mary points to the photo of President Franklin D. Roosevelt hanging over the chalkboard in the picture she is showing].

T. STATHOS: Oh, yes. Roosevelt . . . that is Roosevelt.

M. STATHOS: Oh, Roosevelt, President Roosevelt . . . I don't know, I can't, I don't have my glasses. And this, of course, they have the Greek-American flag and the Greek flag. And this was . . . these were council members of the church.

SANDUL: So the gentlemen on the sides in the suits, okay?

M. STATHOS: Yes. And, of course, this is our Greek school teacher, who was the first one that taught us grammar, most of them just taught us to read.

SANDUL: Were most of the teachers men?

T. STATHOS: No.

M. STATHOS: No.

T. STATHOS: A lot of women . . .

M. STATHOS: We started out with women . . .and . . . it was . . .

SANDUL: Now did your children go to Greek school?

M. STATHOS: Yes.

T. STATHOS: Well . . . the oldest one did.

M. STATHOS: Yes they did . . .

T. STATHOS: The first three did.

M. STATHOS: They all did but the first one learned the most. They didn't learn like we
did . . .

T. STATHOS: And the last one didn't want to learn Greek at all, now she wants to learn.

M. STATHOS: Now she says why didn't you force me to take . . .

T. STATHOS: Force you, we used to yell at her, scream at her! Used to try to bribe her
and what not, she didn't want anything to do with Greeks, and now.

SANDUL: So did they only attend for a very short while?

T. STATHOS: A few years, yes. Denise is pretty good, she reads it pretty well, speaks it
well. Valerie understands quite a bit. Perry is just learning to speak it a
little better.

SANDUL: Did they regularly attend church with you, Sunday school?

T. STATHOS: Do what?

SANDUL: Did they regularly attend church with you, Sunday school . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes. Mary is a good matriarch. And . . .

M. STATHOS: This is that play we were talking about? Here's Tony . . .yes.

SANDUL: So it's a newspaper clipping of you guys doing the play, "The Exceptional Cabbage." An article from the *Bee*. Oh, wow.

M. STATHOS: And this is another one. Here's Eppie Johnson here . . . He was my American boyfriend, which was a no-no. We even depicted it in the play.

SANDUL: Another newspaper clipping.

T. STATHOS: Here is where I was in charge of the yearbook for college.

SANDUL: So another . . . this is you as a younger man here. . .

T. STATHOS: That's me, yes.

SANDUL: Okay, another newspaper clipping. Okay.

T. STATHOS: And, that me there, no.

M. STATHOS: No

T. STATHOS: No.

M. STATHOS: Here you are right here. He had his hair toned because he was supposed to be my father in the play [Mary laughs].

T. STATHOS: Here I am here.

SANDUL: Okay. And here you are in the air force . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes.

SANDUL: And this is your daughter?

T. STATHOS: No, no, no. My little niece

M. STATHOS: No . . . niece.

SANDUL: Your little niece, okay.

T. STATHOS: Yes, my, air force . . .

SANDUL: Okay.

M. STATOHS: His father.

T. STATHOS: Oh, we got some great pictures here. . . . Alright . . .

M. STATHOS: Here's somebody [someone enters the house and leaves to the back].

T. STATHOS: I can show you a lot of my family here. Big brother George.

SANDUL: Okay. . . . Actually let me pause here, it's a little hard to get . . . [Tape is paused as Stathos shows various pictures of his family].

Well, is it important to you, or is it important to you as parents,
that your children develop a strong Greek identity.

T. STATHOS: Absolutely. Absolutely. We try our best. And, very frankly, I think we've done a fairly good job. They're pretty well and attentive. Now Perry, he is a Parish Council member of the Saint Catherine's church and he goes regularly to church. Denise, the oldest, she goes quite often. Valerie, she got some jobs that kind of keep her off. Pam doesn't want to go [laughter]. See, she came late in life, she got spoiled rotten, and we all spoke English about her, you know, and she didn't get much Greek.

M. STATHOS: Another Greek independence [Mary shows a newspaper clipping, with a photo, of a Greek play of the Independence Day of March 25], they all had costumes . . .

SANDUL: Okay, another newspaper clipping of of you there . . .

T. STATHOS: That's your sister.

SANDUL: Or your sister.

M. STATHOS: My sister.

SANDUL: And you're dressed, and what are these . . .

M. STATHOS: Amelia customs . . . Queen Amelia.

SANDUL: Okay . . . Amelia costumes . . . okay.

M. STATHOS: Yes.

T. STATHOS: Here are four brothers, here [Tony points to a photo].

SANDUL: And these are?

T. STATHOS: Twins . . .

M. STATHOS: My father.

T. STATHOS: These are identical twins.

SANDUL: Okay, so these are pictures of your father here . . .

M. STATHOS: He left for America . . . yes . . .

T. STATHOS: He came to America, he never stayed in Greece.

M. STATHOS: He never stayed in Greece.

SANDUL: Okay.

M. STATHOS: And they surprised my father, this . . .

T. STATHOS: Uncle Frank.

M. STATHOS: Brought him over, fifty years apart.

T. STATHOS: Okay, so they surprised your father with his brother.

M. STATHOS: Yes . . .

T. STATHOS: Here's what happened. We're all down in the basement and we're all sitting there and Uncle Frank gets up there and says "Now," he's tearfull, and he, "I want to present," and then walks in the brother. My father-in-law looks like this [Stathos impersonates his father-in-law, Dan Fotos, as frozen and staring blankly].

M. STATHOS: It's a wonder he didn't have a heart attack, he hadn't seen him for fifty years.

T. STATHOS: He sat there forty-five minutes, spell bound. He could not move, he could not talk. He says, "Dan, it's me, it's me." "Huh, huh." And finally, the realization came, it was his brother. So you see, they had ties, you know, he thought he'd never see him again, thought he'd never see Greece or anything else. Well, it was emotional, it was emotional, a great event. Alright, where you now Paul?

M. STATHOS: I keep . . .

SANDUL: Were your children involved in any Greek folk dance groups or other organizations, you know . . . Greek school?

T. STATHOS: Yes. Denise especially, she, is one of the earliest dance groups. The . . . the Olympians . . .

M. STATHOS: The Olympians . . . they were called.

T. STATHOS: Now, when our kids were growing up there was no organized dance groups. She and a group, her age group, got together, and there a couple kids in there that spoke . . . that danced very well. So they got a group together and they would were the Greek customs, and, the short ones, you know, and they'd put on some great dances. And other people started copying and then pretty soon they got the little kids involved and now it is a state wide event, state wide could be . . . interstate, interstate wide.

M. STATHOS: Our grandson is very active in it . . .

T. STATHOS: And, yes . . . he is . . . okay . . .

M. STATHOS: Sixteen . . . just loves it.

SANDUL: Do you feel any conflicts between the American culture of your children and your Greek identity.

T. STATHOS: No . . .

M. STATHOS: What do you mean?

T. STATHOS: I don't know what . . .

SANDUL: Do you feel any conflict with how Americanized you think your children may have become compared to when you described, earlier, how you grew up in a one hundred percent Greek community?

T. STATHOS: No, no. I think that every generation grows up within itself, you know. We talk about the good old days and our kids, when they're older, they're

going to talk about their good old days, which are our old days. So its . . .
yes.

M. STATHOS: But their still connected to the Greek community, which makes us happy.

T. STATHOS: But they have a different perspective because they're growing up in a
new era. No, we're proud our kids enjoy being Greek. And each time
here's a real event . . .

M. STATHOS: In fact, this is Pam's book . . . that was the Greek book . . .

SANDUL: Okay the Greek schoolbook that we looked at earlier, okay.

M. STATHOS: Yes . . .yes, the first grade primer. This is our youngest daughter's, the
one who learned the least Greek.

SANDUL: Okay.

M. STATHOS: Yes, but now he's . . .

T. STATHOS: Denise [Stathos brings out a large color framed picture of his children
and their families, c. late 1990s/early2000s].

SANDUL: And here's a picture of your family.

T. STATHOS: Us.

SANDUL: Okay.

M. STATHOS: Their our children.

T. STATHOS: Our children.

SANDUL: Your children.

T. STATHOS: Denise, her three boys, okay.

SANDUL: Okay.

T. STATHOS: Pam, her boys, her daughter, okay. Here's Valerie and her two daughters. And that's her former husband. And that's Perry and his little Greek wife and their two little kids.

SANDUL: Okay. So a nice group portrait of all of them.

T. STATHOS: Yes, and they gave this on our fiftieth anniversary, it was a surprise, notice we're not in it . . . [Stathos puts picture away]. Alright, anything else we can help you with?

SANDUL: I was wondering as a youth, even as a young adult, even currently, do you feel that at any point you have experienced any bias or prejudice on account of your Greek heritage?

T. STATHOS: When we grew up we . . . you know, about Socrates being homosexual and all that. We used to get that in vulgar terms, okay, "Look out for the Greek." Don't, "Look out" you know, "The Greek" . . .

M. STATHOS: Don't walk behind him [Mary laughs].

T. STATHOS: Yes, don't walk behind him. The national anthem is, "I'm Walking Behind You" [Mary laughs]. You haven't heard that? Ever know that song, "I'm Walking Behind You?" [Mary laughs]. Okay. And don't get in the shower and pick up soap when you're in the shower. We used to get some horrible jabs, "God dam greasy Greeks," you know, and . . . "God dam Greeks," okay. It just slid right over my head.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

SANDUL: We were . . . you were telling me about how pretty much the prejudice
you let fly over your head.

T. STATHOS: You know it wasn't as much as it was toward some of the other
nationalities, okay . . .

M. STATHOS: But there were a lot of ethnic groups at that . . . you know . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes . . . all the other groups, you know, they had names for the Chinese,
of course, and the Japanese and ours, unfortunately, always referred to
the homosexuality of the philosophers and all the kind of vulgar sexual
connotations and . . . but that never bothered me, I . . .

M. STATHOS: It actually was more of a joke.

T. STATHOS: Yes, it was kind of like a joke, yes.

SANDUL: So was it a concern for the Greek American community as a whole?

M. STATHOS: No.

T. STATHOS: No, not really, I never gave it a thought. . . . No, and I don't remember
anybody . . .

M. STATHOS: I never thought we were discriminated.

T. STATHOS: Let me tell you the way I feel when I grow up and people say, "Hey, will
you spell your name," "S-T-A-T-H-O-S," And I says "That's Greek you
know." "Yes, I thought so, I thought so." I let them know I'm Greek,

you bet I do. And I've never heard, of all the jobs I've had, and things I've done, I've never heard say, "Well, I don't know about you Greek," you know, I never had that form of prejudice, no. Just like Mary says it was bad jokes.

SANDUL: Do you feel that your children ever had to go through any of that?

M. STATHOS: No.

T. STATHOS: No. No.

M. STATHOS: Now . . . usually the first born of every family did not know English when they started school. I know my brother he had to be sent home because he didn't know English . . .

T. STATHOS: My brother too . . .

M. STATHOS: Your brother too . . .

T. STATHOS: George didn't know a word of English went to school . . .

M. STATHOS: But then, someway somehow, you know, they learn it. Now we give them all the tools and they still don't know [laughter].

SANDUL: How has Sacramento's Greek American community changed in your lifetime?

T. STATHOS: Well, we used to be very small and close knit.

M. STATHOS: You knew everyone in church.

T. STATHOS: You knew everyone.

M. STATHOS: Yes, now there's a lot of people.

T. STATHOS: You knew the parents, you knew the kids. Now we have grown so much, now we have three churches, okay. So when I told you about the church being a way of life, alright. Well you have the Elk Grove group grown out there. You have the Sacramento Annunciation . . .

M. STATHOS: Which was the first church.

T. STATHOS: Now you have Saint Anna's in Roseville. So each group is congealing within itself you see. And, we have some joint affairs . . .

M. STATHOS: Yes.

T. STATHOS: Basically now you go to this church, you do all the things that that church does, their community affairs, their parties, their what not. And the Sacramento group and so forth. Unless it's something . . .

M. STATHOS: We don't have . . . we used to have Greek picnics, we don't have them anymore.

T. STATHOS: Yes

M. STATHOS: Every organization, Greek organization, would have their picnic and everybody would go. And then you'd bring your own food, you know, my mother would bake in the roaster, I mean real good food [Mary laughs].

T. STATHOS: We used to have picnics, I mean, a ball . . .

M. STATHOS: I mean, it was fun . . .

T. STATHOS: At one picnic, Mary was there, and we had a ball [laughter]. You remember?

M. STATHOS: No

T. STATHOS: You don't remember? We were out there dancing having a ball and nobody knew about, and we went out in to a hall, there was a little hall out at Hellenic . . . oh yes.

M. STATHOS: [Mary laughs] Vaguely.

SANDUL: When was this?

T. STATHOS: Out at the . . .

M. STATHOS: We weren't married yet.

T. STATHOS: No, what' the name . . .

M. STATHOS: Helvetia Park.

T. STATHOS: Helvetia . . .

SANDUL: Now this is back in '49, '50?

T. STATHOS: New Helvetia . . .

M. STATHOS: Yes.

T. STATHOS: Yes. New Helvetia Park. You ought to put that down.

M. STATHOS: We used to have a lot of picnics out there because we didn't have any places to, yes [phone rings] . . . that was a real popular one.

[Tape paused]

T. STATHOS: You tell him Mary.

SANDUL: Well, as we paused here to have you answer the phone Mary began to sharing a little story about how men sat on one side of the church and the women on the other . . .

M. STATHOS: One side of the church and the women on the other side of the church and the children would sit with the mother on the. . .

T. STATHOS: Yes.

M. STATHOS: On the left side. But there was this one women, she must have been the first women crusader, she would always go to the right, the men would sit on the right, she would always would go to the right and sit where the men were, with her husband though and here family. And us kids, we were little, and we would say, "Oh, look at her she's sitting on the men's side" [laughter].

SANDUL: Is this still . . .

T. STATHOS: Taboo . . .

SANDUL: Evident today or . . .

M. STATHOS: No.

T. STATHOS: No, no, no.

M. STATHOS: It's mixed up

T. STATHOS: That was taboo.

M. STATHOS: Yes [Tony laughs]. The men would separate from the women, why I don't know . . . I guess . . .

SANDUL: When did this start changing?

M. STATHOS: When did it start . . . we were still at the old church.

T. STATHOS: We were still at the old church . . .

M. STATHOS: We were at service you . . .

T. STATHOS: Now I remember my mom and I being on both sides of the church
various times, honey . . .

M. STATHOS: Well the kids would always go with a . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes.

M. STATHOS: Yes . . . With the mother.

T. STATHOS: Well, sometimes mom and I would sit on one side and another . . .

M. STATHOS: Yes, we were still at 7th and N when we started separating.

T. STATHOS: That's this one here. Looks big, but when they put the chairs in there
weren't many, not too much room . . .

SANDUL: Now you're showing me a picture of your baptism [Stathos is displaying
a picture of his baptism in the old church on 7th and N Street, circa 1928.
One of his parents holds him in the middle as a group of family and
friends surround them].

T. STATHOS: Yes.

SANDUL: And of the old church there and the inside, okay.

T. STATHOS: And it shows the cutest little baby boy [Mary laughs].

SANDUL: I would have to agree.

T. STATHOS: Oh golly.

SANDUL: Now is there anything you think that I may have missed to have asked
that you would like to include?

M. STATHOS: Well

T. STATHOS: No I think . . .

M. STATHOS: Our heritage is very important to us

T. STATHOS: Yes

M. STATHOS: Yes

T. STATHOS: And I think as we grow, and the three churches, and in the way it is
broken up, the community still, you know . . .

M. STATHOS: Well that's just like anything else . . .

T. STATHOS: When there is a mutual cause . . .

M. STATHOS: There used to be, you know . . .

T. STATHOS: When there is a mutual cause or a mutual project, perhaps, or it benefits
everybody, everybody jumps in. You know it's like Sparta and Athens . .

M. STATHOS: In the old days, not our generation, but our parent's generation, they
always referred to the woman with the man's name . . . like Tony's . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes, that's very important. You didn't know that?

M. STATHOS: Tony's mother's name was . . .

T. STATHOS: Periclina [phonetic].

M. STATHOS: Because her husband was . . .

T. STATHOS: Pericles.

M. STATHOS: Pericles.

T. STATHOS: My father was Pericles . . .

M. STATHOS: Yes . . . so she was Periclina.

T. STATHOS: So she was Periclina.

M. STATHOS: Yes. But you know my mother never did that . . .

T. STATHOS: No, she never did get that . . .

M. STATHOS: It was most of the old, she was younger than your mother. But they all . .

T. STATHOS: So they would take the man's first name and feminize it.

M. STATHOS: Yes . . . and that's . . .

T. STATHOS: Okay.

M. STATHOS: In other words she was . . .

T. STATHOS: They were partial to the husband.

M. STATHOS: More or less, they identified who they belonged to and all of our middle names were taken from my father's name. Like, I am Mary Dan Fotos or Stathos. And that's to show what family you came from.

T. STATHOS: That's right.

M. STATHOS: Which I think it's not . . .

T. STATHOS: It's a good idea, sure.

M. STATHOS: Smart . . . yes . . .

SANDUL: That practice stopped mainly, as far as the feminization . . .

M. STATHOS: Yes.

T. STATHOS: Yes, recently . . .

M. STATHOS: Like our son has your middle name.

T. STATHOS: My middle name, yes.

M. STATHOS: But the girls I didn't give them . . . like all of us girls we had my father's
name for a middle name . . .

T. STATHOS: Her middle name is Dan.

M. STATHOS: My two sisters dropped it, I still have it.

T. STATHOS: She's proud of her dad, he is a good man.

M. STATHOS: But everybody says, "Did your parents want a boy?" [Mary laughs].

T. STATHOS: You didn't ask the big question, how did I get along with my in-laws
after we got married.

SANDUL: Well, you know, how did you? [Laughter].

T. STATHOS: Well believe it or not. When Mary and I we . . . I went to school, I had a
little house, the one I showed you, and I started working and eventually
we got married in the church and then I went to school. I kept working,
going to college, became a schoolteacher and our first baby girl we
named after my father-in-law. He's name is Dan. He's Dionysious, and
we name here Dionysia [phonetic].

M. STATHOS: Which we call her Denise.

T. STATHOS: Denise. We call her Denise. And my father-in-law couldn't been happier, I'd go over there, I got hugs and kisses all the time, he told me, he says, "I think I love you more than my own kids," he says. So, I'd been a hard worker, I think I've done pretty well, I brought some dignity and class to our family and our name because I belong to them as much as they belong to me. So what grace I brought to the family falls on them too you see.

M. STATHOS: And that's the thing my father would preach to us all the time, he says, you know how we would have to marry Greek, and he says, "I would rather you," which doesn't make sense, logic, "I would rather you marry the worst Greek than an American" [heavy laughter]. Does that make sense? But that's how they felt.

T. STATHOS: Now come on, have we peaked your interest in any way, what have you, what have we overlooked?

SANDUL: Is it important for you now that your children marry Greek?

M. STATHOS: Its nice . . .

T. STATHOS: It would be nice . . .

M. STATHOS: But we don't push it.

T. STATHOS: But it doesn't work.

M. STATHOS: Our son married . . .

T. STATHOS: A Greek girl.

M. STATHOS: A Greek girl, in fact, she's originally from Greece. And they have a wonderful marriage. And their children, our grandchildren, know excellent Greek.

T. STATHOS: Yes.

M. STATHOS: Yes, and they go to Greek school . . .

T. STATHOS: Of course, their grandparents on the other side are Greek too. But, it would have been nice but it didn't work out that way and the three girls are all divorced . . .

M. STATHOS: I mean we didn't . . . we didn't prohibit them from going out . . .

T. STATHOS: Yes.

M. STATHOS: With non-Greeks, you know, or anything like that . . .

T. STATHOS: Well frankly, there not that many Greek boys involved. You know, at one time we're all so squeezed together so everybody knew everybody.

M. STATHOS: And the thing is you got to understand, you know, our parents were so strict the only recreation we had was our church, you know, and so we mixed more with the other Greeks our age, you know, which . . .

T. STATHOS: Then our kids have their radio, their TV and everybody is becoming more Americanized. Even the Vietnamese will be Americanized one day.

SANDUL: Well okay, well I thank you very much for your time.

T. STATHOS: Did you mention that your talking to a very beautiful handsome couple
here [Mary laughs] been married 54 years?

SANDUL: Well the thing is I don't posses the verbal prowess [laughter] . . . to do
you justice [laughter].

M. STATHOS: Funny, don't . . . [laughter].

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[End interview]